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DDCI Notes + NIO/USSR-EE
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11/2/80

I. Why Soviets did it:

- Saw pro-Soviet-Afghan regime crumbling.
- Likely alternative was anti-Communist tribal government cool, possibly hostile to USSR, or chaos festering instability on Soviet border with some possibility of spillover
- Amin both inept and unresponsive. Removing him necessary, although not sufficient for stabilizing regime.
- Costs of failing to act outweighed prospective gains:
 - Blow to Soviet prestige. They couldn't even preserve gains on their own border.
 - A shot in arm to Muslim fundamentalism which could spread to Soviet Muslim groups.
 - Possible opening for external powers, including PRC to extend influence into traditional Soviet sphere.

But they could also foresee potential benefits:

- Sent clear signal USSR has power in area and will to use it. Intimidate lesser states of area.
- Positions Soviets better to exert political pressure on highly vulnerable Iran and unstable Pakistan, the key to Soviet aspirations on access to Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean
- Contributes to strategy of encircling China.

Moment Propitious:

- US preoccupied with Iran. Potential for tacitly trading Soviet blind eye toward US actions in Iran for US blind eye on Afghanistan.
- Iran unable to react. Zia on the ropes and seeming abandoned by US. Indira has good chance to return in India; her government likely to be even more pro-Soviet in outlook, than present government

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- Relations with PRC at a low.
- Much less to lose in US relations than in decade; SALT in trouble and benefits seem diminishing; little expected from US in election year
- Cuban influenced NAM unlikely to protest.
- No risk of military confrontation with ~~any~~ outside power. With other world problems memories will be short as in Czechoslovakia.

II. How

Political and military chronology documents events.

Briefly intervention evolved in stages.

Phase I: Preparations began late November after Pavloskiy's visit in early fall.

Phase II: - 1,500 troops airlifted to Bagram for security

Chart 1 - established command, control and communications
Airlift necessary for large scale intervention
Capability

Phase III: Large scale intervention began 24 December

Chart 2 1) Massive airlift

(12-31 Dec)

- moved quickly to topple Amin

- obtained control of capital

Chart 3 2) Proceeded to move ground troops totaling 25,000
(28-30 Dec) on 28th thru 30th into Afghanistan

Chart 4 3) Have two or more motorized rifle divisions
(Available that could move in on short notice
forces)

Intervention provides dramatic demonstration of:

- mobility of equipment and troops, especially airlift usage
- Soviet military outreach capability

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III. Prospects are for long Soviet involvement:

- Afghanistan ^{has been} ~~has~~ strong martial tradition and history of resistance to foreign invasion.
- Soviet-Babrak pacification theme unlikely to sell. Tribal resistance will continue.
- Absent massive commitment ^{much} ~~many times~~ larger than now deploying. Soviets can only protect major cities and ~~even~~ ^{small} rebel ~~pockets~~ ^{concentration}.

(MAP) a. Terrain is in insurgents favor. They will melt into hills, controlling any areas where Soviets not concentrated and prey on exposed ^{communication} ~~convey~~ lines.

b. Terrorism likely to increase.

Soviets have major rebuilding task ahead:

- Weak political structure.
- Afghan army has withered from 80,000 to about 40,000 ^{perhaps even} through desertions, and loyalty of remainder is questionable.
- Some units continue to resist coup.
- Desertions continue apace.
- Manpower pool is shrinking. Officer corps has been and will be even more decimated by purges, arrests, and executions.

But insurgents have problems as well:

- Despite their numbers--about 100,000--they are ill equipped, poorly led, and disorganized.
- There are probably several hundred independent groups with no central command. Many fight each other.
- They are no match for Soviet troops.
- Pak support is tenuous; dependent on shaky regime which feels isolated and threatened by Soviets.

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- Likely to see insurgents lying low during winter. Quieter period will offer opportunity to Soviets to work politically.

Nevertheless, Soviets face significant problems and liabilities:

- Quick pacification unlikely. Escalating military commitment may be necessary.
- External assistance to insurgents may increase; Soviets will pressure Paks to curtail support. PRC could become involved.
- Moslem reaction, while not vocal, likely to be profound. Time will work against Soviets.

IV. Soviet Perspective

Despite above, Soviets now see themselves heavily committed to a course of action making early withdrawal highly unlikely, even on optimistic assumptions about ability to eventually stabilize Karmal regime.

- We doubt that bilateral pressures from US or any other likely external pressures can compel Soviet decision to withdraw
- Likely Soviet reaction would be to dig in still deeper, respond in kind to punitive US action, work hard to split US off from allies and others, count on time, success in quieting Afghan situation, strategic disunity of states that now object, Soviet persistence and surfacing of other issues requiring Soviet cooperation or acquiescence, to dissipate external pressures

Nevertheless, while compelling withdrawal not a feasible objective, raising costs beyond those which Soviets may now bargain for could have salutary consequences for future Soviet behavior

- A prolonged politically costly Soviet experience in Afghanistan could make the environment for expansion of Soviet influence in Third World less promising and constrain future Soviet options
 - Present and potential future Soviet security partners might be more wary
 - Moderates might be more receptive to security cooperation with US

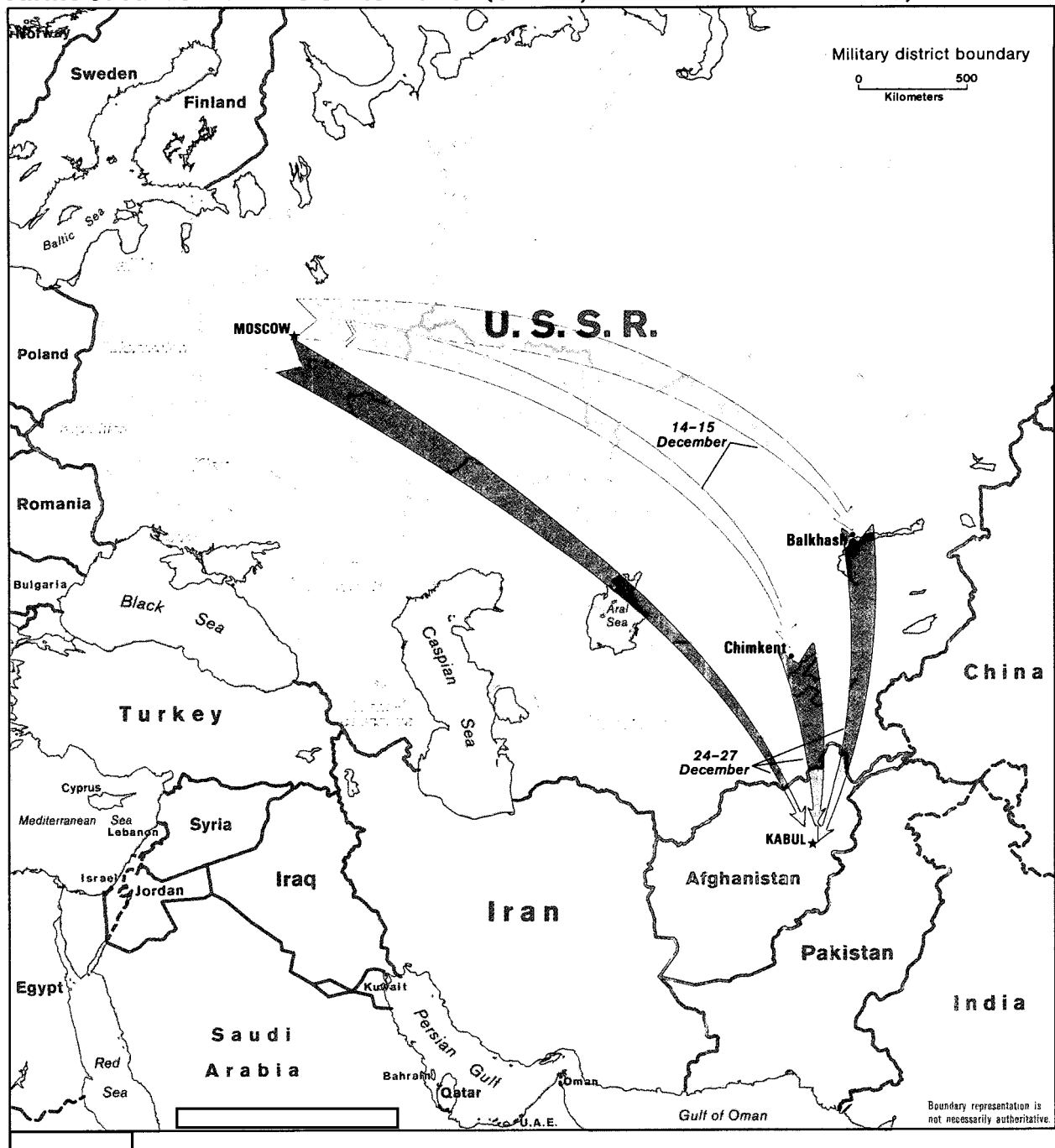
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- Could tend to restore better balance in NAM
- ← Costs imposed on Soviet could have far-reaching effects on policies of future Soviet leadership
- Soviet crossing of this new threshold coincides with new signs that succession underway (e.g., Kosygin may now be through)
- In transitional period outcome of Afghan intervention could strongly condition foreign policy orientation of impressionable successors
- Success could set important precedent for successors, some of which may in any case be dubious about benefits of detente
- A hi-cost pyrrhic victory could provide opposite momentum strengthening position of those already concerned about disproportionate costs of 3rd world adventures

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Airlift of Airborne Division to Kabul (14-15, 24-27 December 1979)



Soviet Forces Mobilizing Opposite Afghanistan (12-31 December 1979)



Soviet Overland Intervention (28-30 December 1979)



Soviet Forces in Afghanistan

Airborne Divisions 2
 Motorized Rifle Divisions 2



Additional Soviet Ground Forces Available for Rapid Deployment



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